

GERMINATING

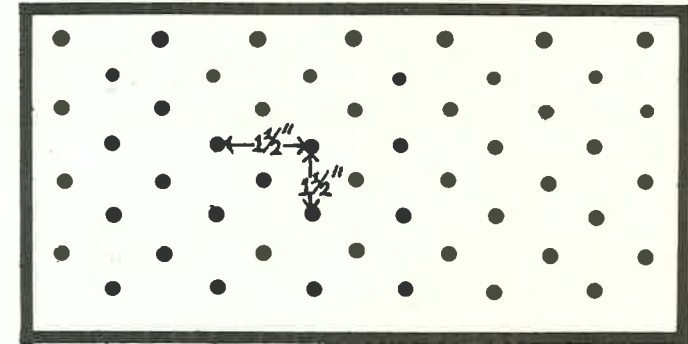
The first step in germinating is to soak the seeds in clean lukewarm water for 24 hours. If by chance you happen to be on welfare or unemployment and have gobs of free time, an alternate and more elaborate method can be employed. First, lay out about 4 or 5 layers of paper towels – any brand will do – and spread the seeds on top. Next, cover the seeds with 4 or 5 more layers of paper towels. Then roll the whole thing up in an old terrycloth towel and soak the rolled towel in warm water. Place the towel in a very warm place – near a heater, above a stove, or, for you yoga freaks hung-up on the Sirshasana (head stand), suspending the towel from a hot air vent is ideal. Soak the towel at least twice a day.

Continue this soaking process for six days and then very, very carefully remove the towel and you will see the reason for the layers of paper. Seedlings will have begun to grow and send their roots through the layers of paper and into the towel. Be sure to separate the roots from the towel very carefully; in fact, it is best to cut the towel around the root with a razor blade, since pulling the roots from the towel may damage or even break the root. It will not hurt the plant to wear this collar for awhile. Also, great care should be used in separating the seedlings from the paper towels. If you see that a seedling has bound itself firmly to the paper, merely cut around the root so as not to damage the root hairs.

Upon peeling back the fourth layer, you will find many plants in various stages of development. Some will have a little bit of root extending from the seed, while others will have cast off their seed pods and grown two round yellowish leaflike things called Cotyledons. These are what you will want to plant. Put five new layers of paper towels on the remaining seeds and roll them up again for two additional days. Repeat the process until no more seedlings are produced.

PLANTING THE SEEDS

The soil in your planter should be fairly firm and moist (not flooded). Poke rows of holes 1/2" deep (definitely not deeper) and about 1 1/2" apart, staggering the rows as shown in the formation below. Rows should be about 1 1/2" from each other



Cover the seeds with the soil, tamp the soil lightly, and sprinkle water lightly over the covered seeds. Next place the planter in a spot which is reasonably warm and allows a minimum of 8 hours of sunlight. If this is not possible, the planter must be placed under a fluorescent light or a 60-watt bulb until the plants germinate (see pg.30 for instructions on artificial light).

If you have built a germinating box, you will not have to hassle with finding a sunny spot for the seeds; simply leave on the light in the box 24 hours a day until the seeds have germinated, making sure that the temperature does not get over 90 degrees, and that the soil remains moist. After the seeds have sprouted, merely remove the side and cover and use the artificial light to supplement the natural sunlight. TOTAL LIGHT EXPOSURE SHOULD NOT EXCEED 18 HOURS A DAY. One of the most common errors is to leave the plants under the light for 24 hours a day after they have broken through the soil. The plants will grow faster, but in a short time the top portion becomes too heavy for the spindly stem to support and they will lop over and invariably die. Eighteen hours a day of light is sufficient.